REMARKS

Claims 1-4 and 6-9 are now present in this application, with Claims 1 and 3 being independent and the other claims dependent therefrom.

Applicants have amended Claims 1 and 3 to further clarify the present invention.

As now amended, Claim 1 is to an electrical connector that has a first female connector housing and a second male connector housing mating with the first female connector housing. The first female connector housing has a male connector housing mating space with a first peripheral wall, and a tapered surface formed on an inner surface of the first peripheral wall, while the second male connector housing has an inner housing with a second peripheral wall, and a tapered surface projecting from an outer surface and positioned at a forward end of the second peripheral wall. Each tapered surface is integrally formed on the first and second connector housings, and the tapered surfaces are inclined in the mating direction of the first and second connector housings, with the tapered surfaces engaging with each other on complete mating of the first and second connector housings. Independent Claim 3, as now amended, is to an electrical connector that has a first female connector housing, and a second male connector housing mating with the first female connector housing. The first female connector housing has a male connector housing space with a first peripheral wall, and the second male connector housing has an inner housing with a second peripheral wall. A tapered surface is integrally formed on one of an inner surface of the first peripheral wall of the first female connector housing and, a projection extends from an outer surface, positioned at a forward end of the second peripheral wall, of the second male connector housing.

The tapered surface is inclined in the mating direction of the first female and second male connector housings, and the tapered surface is engaged with a surface of the other connector housing on mating of the first female and second male connector housings. Such an arrangement of electrical connectors is not taught or suggested in the prior art.

In the Office Action dated February 1, 2008, Claims 1-9 were rejected as anticipated under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) by Fukuda (U.S. 2003/0077939). The rejection is similar to that of the first Office Action to which arguments were provided in a response filed November 16, 2007. In response to these remarks, the present Office Action responds that Applicant argues "The surface (3b), referred to in the sketch on page 3 of the Office Action, is on an end of the packing (39) that provides a seal in the male housing (3) and is not integrally formed on the housing as required in the present invention." And also "while there may be some contact between identified tapered surfaces (2b) and (3b) in assembly of the connector, these surfaces do not engage with each other on "complete" mating of the two housings." The Office Action responds to these arguments by stating that it is shown clearly in FIG. 4 of Fukuda that the tapered surfaces of housing (3) are not part of the packing (39) but part of housing elements. Also, it is alleged that, as shown in FIG. 16 of Fukuda, (lower part) tapered surfaces of the housing (2) and housing (3) engage with each other.

Upon further study of Fukuda, it appears that the elements (3b) referred to in the Office Action in the sketch therein are not an integral part of the packing (39) and Applicants stand corrected. With respect to the Office Action's reference to FIG. 16, however, Applicants do not believe the tapered surfaces are comparable to those of the present claimed connector.

In Fukuda, the tapered surfaces on the end portion of the wall of the female housing (2) contact a tapered surface of a protrusion (53a) that protrudes towards the female housing (2) (paragraph 72). There are three protrusions (53a and 53b) arranged between the recess (52) and the hole (51) and the packing (39) (paragraph 74). The protrusions (53a) and the edge of the peripheral wall (13) of the female housing (2) may contact each other (paragraph 114).

The present device is distinct from Fukuda in that a tapered surface on the inner surface of a peripheral wall of a first female housing cooperates with a tapered surface projecting from an outer surface positioned at a forward end of a peripheral wall of a second male connector housing, which is not the arrangement found or suggested in Fukuda.

Applicants have amended independent Claims 1 and 3 to provide additional structural features to the claimed electrical connector, so as to emphasize distinctions between the present electrical connector and that of Fukuda.

Specifically, in Claim 1, it is now provided that a first female connector housing has a male connector housing mating space with a first peripheral wall, and a tapered surface formed on an inner surface of the first peripheral wall, while the second male connector housing has an inner housing with a second peripheral wall, and a tapered surface projecting from an outer surface and positioned at a forward end of the second peripheral wall, with each tapered surface integrally formed on the first and second connector housings, and the tapered surfaces are inclined in the mating direction of the first and second connector housings, with the tapered surfaces engaging with each other on complete mating of the first and second connector housings. Also, in Claim 3 there is a first female

connector housing, and a second male connector housing mating with the first female connector housing. The first female connector housing has a male connector housing space with a first peripheral wall, and the second male connector housing has an inner housing with a second peripheral wall where a tapered surface is integrally formed on one of an inner surface of the first peripheral wall of the first female connector housing and, a projection extends from an outer surface, positioned at a forward end of the second peripheral wall, of the second male connector housing. The tapered surface is inclined in the mating direction and engaged with a surface of the other connector housing on mating of the first female and second male connector housings.

Such structure of an electrical connector are not taught or suggested in the Fukuda reference.

In view of the present amendments to the claims and the above remarks, Claims 1-4 and 6-9, as amended, are believed to be patentable and early allowance thereof is respectfully requested.

In the event that this paper is not timely filed, the applicants respectfully petition for an appropriate extension of time. Please charge any fees for such an extension of time and any other fees which may be due with respect to this paper, to Deposit Account No. 01-2340.

Respectfully submitted,

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